INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the Church and industry is a significant topic in today's world. Both wield substantial influence over people's lives and work, yet they operate in distinct ways. The Church serves as a moral and spiritual guide, concentrating on ethical living, justice, and faith development. On the other hand, industry is propelled by production, innovation, employment, and economic advancement.In today's world, industry and the Church frequently intersect, influencing aspects ranging from workplace standards to broader economic systems. Industry drives growth and modernization, while the Church provides a moral framework that can influence business operations and worker treatment.

This study examines the mutual impact of the Church and industry, showcasing both the benefits of their interaction and the tensions that may occur. It ultimately considers how their relationship affects society overall.

MEANING AND RELATIONSHIP OF CHURCH AND INDUSTRY

MEANING OF THE CHURCH

The church, in christian doctrine, is the Christian religious community as a whole, or a body or organization of christian believers. The Greek word *ekklēsia,* which came to mean church, was originally applied in the Classical period to an official assembly

of citizens.[1] In the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament (3rd–2nd century BCE), the term *ekklēsia* is used for the general assembly of the Jewish people, especially when gathered for a religious purpose such as hearing the Law (Deuteronomy 9:10, 18:16). In the New Testament it is used of the entire body of believing Christians throughout the world (Matthew 16:18), of the believers in a particular area (Acts 5:11), and also of the congregation meeting in a particular house, the "house-church" (Romans 16:5).

MEANING OF AN INDUSTRY

Industry, in philosophical terms, is the organized application of human labor and creativity to transform nature into forms that sustain and advance life. It is not only an economic activity but also a social and moral institution, reflecting humanity's drive to innovate, cooperate, and impose order on the material world, while raising ethical questions about justice, dignity, and responsibility.[2]

HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND INDUSTRY

The relationship between the Church and industry developed more clearly during the Industrial Revolution. Before this period, the Church played an important role in social and economic life, especially through monasteries that were involved in agriculture,

[1] Britannica Editors, *Philosophy and Religion: Religious Beliefs* (April 15, 2026 Edition), https://www.britannica.com/topic/church-Christianity, (Accessed 25/05/2026).
[2] Philippe Fontaine, *The Concept of Industrie from the Physiocrats to J.-B. Say, Contributions to Political Economy*, Vol. 12, Issue 1, 1993, pp. 89–97.

education, and small-scale production. With industrialization in the 18th and 19th centuries, production moved from farms and workshops to factories, leading to urban growth and new social problems such as poor working conditions, low wages, and child labor. The Church responded by speaking out on these issues and promoting fairness and human dignity in work.

A key moment was the publication of *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII in 1891, which defended workers' rights and called for just wages and ethical treatment of laborers.[3] Since then, the Church has continued to influence industrial society through its teachings on social justice and the dignity of work. Today, the Church and industry continue to interact, with the Church focusing on moral guidance while industry drives economic development.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH ON INDUSTRY

MORAL AND ETHICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The Church has played a major role in influencing industries through its moral teachings and ethical principles. Christianity teaches values such as honesty, justice, fairness, love, and respect for human dignity. These values help to shape the attitudes of employers, workers, and business organizations in society. The

[3] Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html, (Accessed 25/05/2026).

Church believes that every human person is created in the image of God and therefore deserves respect and fair treatment.[4]

During the Industrial Revolution, many workers suffered from difficult conditions in factories. They worked for long hours with little pay and poor treatment. Child labor and exploitation became common in many industrial societies. In response to these problems, the Church began to speak strongly about social justice and workers' rights. The Church condemned exploitation and called on employers to treat workers with dignity and fairness.

One of the most important Church documents on this issue was *Rerum Novarum* written by Pope Leo XIII in 1891. In this encyclical, the Pope defended the rights of workers and emphasized the importance of fair wages, good working conditions, and the protection of the poor.[5] This document became the foundation of modern Catholic social teaching and influenced many governments and industries to pay attention to workers' welfare.

The Church also teaches that industries should not focus only on profit. While profit is important for business growth, the Church insists that human beings must always come first. Pope John Paul II explained in *Laborem Exercens* that work is for the benefit of humanity and not humanity for work.[6] This teaching encourages

[4] Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching 1891–Present* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 45.
[5] Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum (1891)*, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va. (Accessed 27/05/2026).

[6] Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens (1981)*, Vatican Archive https://www.vatican.va.

industries to create healthy working environments and to care for the physical and emotional well-being of workers.

In many parts of the world today, Christian organizations continue to influence industries by promoting ethical business practices. Some companies adopt policies that encourage honesty, accountability, and transparency because of religious and moral influence. Churches also organize seminars and programs that teach business ethics and responsible leadership.

The Church has also influenced industries through the promotion of peace and justice. Industrial activities often lead to conflicts between employers and workers, especially when there are disagreements about salaries and working conditions. In such situations, Church leaders sometimes act as mediators in order to promote peace and reconciliation. Therefore, the Church continues to play an important role in making industries more human-centered and morally responsible.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Apart from moral teachings, the Church contributes socially and economically to industrial development. One major

contribution is education. Many churches establish schools, colleges, universities, and vocational training centers that prepare people for employment and professional work. Through these institutions, people acquire knowledge and skills that are useful for industrial and economic growth.[7]

The Church also contributes through health-care services. Many mission hospitals and health-care centers owned by churches provide medical care to workers and members of society. Healthy workers are important for productivity and national development. By providing health-care and social support, the Church indirectly contributes to industrial growth.

In addition, the Church supports the poor through charity and empowerment programs. Many churches organize skill acquisition programs, scholarship schemes, and financial assistance for unemployed youths and struggling families. These programs help people to become self-reliant and productive in society.

The Church also creates employment opportunities through its own institutions. Churches establish schools, publishing houses, farms, hospitals, and media organizations that employ many

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[7] Michael P. Hornsby-Smith, *An Introduction to Catholic Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 72.

people. Through these activities, the Church contributes directly to the economy and industrial development of society.

Another important contribution of the Church is the promotion of human development. The Church teaches that development should not focus only on wealth and technology but also on the moral and spiritual growth of human beings. Pope Paul VI emphasized this idea in *Populorum Progressio*, where he explained that true development must improve the whole human person and not only the economy.[8]

THE INFLUENCE OF INDUSTRY ON THE CHURCH

POSITIVE IMPACTS

Industry has influenced the Church positively in many ways. One major positive effect is technological advancement. Modern technology has made communication easier and faster, helping the Church to spread its message across the world. Today, churches use television, radio, social media, and internet platforms to preach the gospel and communicate with members.[9]

Through modern transportation systems such as cars, airplanes, and trains, missionaries and Church leaders can travel easily to different parts of the world for evangelization and

[8] Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967), Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va. (Accessed on 27/05/2026).
[9] Encyclopedia Britannica, "Religion and Industrial Society," https://www.britannica.com. (Accessed on 27/05/2026).

humanitarian work. This has helped Christianity to grow rapidly in many countries.

Industrial development has also improved the economic condition of many people. As people become financially stable, they are better able to support Church activities through donations, tithes, and offerings. Many churches today are able to build schools, hospitals, and places of worship because of financial support from members who benefit from industrial and economic growth.

Another positive impact is the improvement in printing and digital technology. In earlier times, religious books were difficult to produce and distribute. Today, Bibles, prayer books, and Christian teachings are easily available because of industrial and technological development. This has helped many people to gain access to religious knowledge.

Furthermore, industrialization has created opportunities for inter-religious dialogue and global interaction. Through globalization and communication technology, churches can now interact with Christians and religious communities from different parts of the world. This encourages unity, cooperation, and exchange of ideas among people of different cultures and backgrounds.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS

Despite its positive effects, industry has also negatively influenced the Church. One major problem is materialism. Industrial societies often place too much emphasis on wealth, profit, and material success. Many people become so focused on work and money that they neglect spiritual life and religious responsibilities.

In many industrialized societies, people spend most of their time working and have little time for prayer, worship, or participation in church activities. As a result, religious commitment and moral values begin to decline.

Industrialization has also contributed to moral problems such as corruption, greed, exploitation, prostitution, and environmental destruction.[10] Some industries exploit workers and damage the environment in their search for profit. These actions conflict with the teachings of the Church, which emphasize justice, love, and care for creation.

Another negative effect of industrialization is secularization. In many modern societies, religion is gradually losing influence because people depend more on science, technology, and economic power than on spiritual guidance. Some people begin to see

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[10] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 103.

religion as less important in modern life. This weakens the influence of the Church in society.

The growth of consumer culture is another challenge created by industrialization. Modern industries use advertising and media to encourage excessive consumption and luxury. This sometimes promotes selfishness and weakens spiritual discipline. The Church therefore continues to remind people that true happiness cannot be found only in material possessions.

Industrial pollution and environmental degradation are also concerns for the Church. Factories and industrial activities often contribute to air pollution, water pollution, and climate change. Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, called on industries and governments to protect the environment and care for the earth as a common home for humanity.[11]

EVALUATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND INDUSTRY

The relationship between the Church and industry is both beneficial and challenging. The Church provides moral guidance and social teachings that encourage justice, peace, and respect for human dignity within industries. Industry, on the other hand, contributes to economic growth, technological advancement, and improved standards of living.

[11] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si' (2015)*, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va.

However, problems arise when industries focus mainly on profit without considering ethics and human welfare. In such situations, the Church acts as a moral voice by speaking against injustice, exploitation, and immoral practices. This shows that the Church serves as a watchdog in society.

Despite their differences, the Church and industry depend on each other for societal development. Industries require moral guidance, while the Church benefits from technological and economic progress. Therefore, both should work together by promoting ethical values, human dignity, and social growth.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Church and industry have maintained an important relationship throughout history. The Church influences industry through moral teachings, social support, and advocacy for justice and human dignity. Industry also influences the Church positively through technological advancement, economic development, and improved communication.

Nevertheless, industrialization has created challenges such as materialism, secularization, exploitation, and environmental destruction, which often conflict with the teachings of the Church. Despite these challenges, both institutions remain very important in society.

The Church and industry should therefore work together in promoting justice, peace, ethical business practices, and the overall well-being of humanity. When both institutions cooperate positively, society becomes more balanced, productive, and morally responsible.